R. Joshua b. Levi said: Whoever makes derogatory remarks about scholars after their death[4] is cast into Gehinnom, as it says, But as for such as turn aside[5] unto their crooked ways, the Lord will lead them away with the workers of iniquity. Peace be upon Israel:[6] even at a time when there is peace upon Israel, the Lord will lead them away with the workers of iniquity.[7] It was taught in the school of R. Ishmael: If you see a scholar who has committed an offence by night, do not cavil at him by day, for perhaps he has done penance. 'Perhaps', say you? — Nay, rather, he has certainly done penance. This applies only to bodily [sexual] offences, but if he has misappropriated money, [he may be criticised] until he restores it to its owner.

R. Joshua b. Levi further said: In twenty-four places we find that the Beth din inflicted excommunication for an insult to a teacher, and they are all recorded in the Mishnah.[8] R. Eleazar asked him, Where? He replied: See if you can find them. He went and examined and found three cases: one of a scholar who threw contempt on the bashing of the hands, another of one who made derogatory remarks about scholars after their death, and a third of one who made himself too familiar towards heaven. What is the case of making derogatory remarks about scholars after their death? — As we have learnt:[9] He[10] used to say: The water [of the sotah][11] is not administered either to a proselyte or to an emancipated woman; the Sages, however say that it is. They said to him: There is the case of Karkemith an emancipated bondwoman in Jerusalem to whom Shemaiah and Abtalyon administered the water? He replied: They administered it to one like themselves.[12] They thereupon excommunicated him, and he died in excommunication, and the Beth din stoned his coffin.[13] What is the case of treating with contempt the washing of the hands? — As we have learnt: R. Judah said: Far be it from us to think that Akabiah b. Mahalalel was excommunicated, for the doors of the Temple hall did not close on any man in Israel[14] the equal of Akabiah b. Mahalalel in wisdom, in purity and in fear of sin. Whom did they in fact excommunicate? It was Eleazar b. Hanoch, who raised doubts about washing the hands, and when he died the Beth din sent and had a large stone placed on his coffin, to teach you that if a man is excommunicated and dies in his excommunication, the Beth din stone his coffin.[15]

What is the case of one behaving familiarly with heaven? — As we have learnt: Simeon b. Shetah sent to Honi ha-Me'aggel:[16] You deserve to be excommunicated, and were you not Honi, I would pronounce excommunication against you. But what can I do seeing that you ingratiate yourself[17] with the Omnipresent and He performs your desires, and you are like a son who ingratiates himself with his father and he performs his desires; and to you applies the verse: Let thy father and thy mother be glad, and let her that bore thee rejoice.[18]

But are there no more [instances of excommunication]? Is not there the case learnt by R. Joseph: Thaddeus a man of Rome accustomed the Roman [Jews] to eat kids roasted whole[19] on the eve of Passover. Simeon b. Shetah sent to him and said: Were you not Thaddeus, I would pronounce sentence of excommunication on you, because you make Israel [appear to] eat holy things outside the precincts.[20] — We say, in our Mishnah. and this is in a Baraitha. But is there no other in our Mishnah? Is there not this one, as we have learnt: If he cuts it[21] up into rings and puts sand between the rings.[22] R. Eliezer declares that it is [permanently] clean, while the Rabbis declare that it is unclean; and this is the stove of Akna'i. Why Akna'i? Rab Judah said in the name of Samuel: Because they surrounded it with halachoth like a serpent [akna'i] and declared it unclean. And it has been taught: On that day they brought all the things that R. Eliezer had declared clean[23] and burnt them before him, and in the end they blessed[24] him.[25] — Even so we do not find excommunication stated in our Mishnah.[26] How then do you find the twenty-four places? — R. Joshua b. Levi compares one thing to another,[27] R. Eleazar does not compare one thing to another.

THOSE WHO CARRY THE BIER AND THOSE WHO RELIEVE THEM. Our Rabbis taught: A dead body is not taken out shortly before the time for the Shema', but if they began to take it they do